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ABSTRACT

Member institutions of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education were surveyed to determine the nature and extent of faculty development activities. Responding institutions placed 27 specific developmental activities in rank order. The top five items were a system of sabbaticals, teaching awards, peer review, professional travel, and the use of student ratings. The items ranked lowest included providing faculty help in developing new methods of teaching, improving faculty's existing methods of teaching, developing course syllabi, constructing tests, and providing guidance and counseling regarding new careers or career development. The use of microcomputers and issues related to certification are the most frequent subjects of workshops offered to faculty, while upgrading research skills and grant writing are the most infrequent topics. Low cost and traditional activities were reported most frequently. The assumption that professional educators are involved in faculty development activities that are adequate, or in any way imaginative, is not supported by this study. (Author/JD)

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A Study of Faculty Development Practices in Schools, Colleges and Departments of Education

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Has faculty development become a fact of university life, or is there much less going on out there than the rhetoric would lead us to believe? Specifically, what developmental activities are currently provided faculty in schools, colleges and departments of education? How extensive are these activities? Do faculty participate? How are they supported?

Methodology

In an effort to answer these questions we surveyed AACTE members--and while we were at it also asked some interesting related questions; for example, is faculty service in K-12 settings used as a factor in merit and promotion? Using a roster of institutions provided by the AACTE, the dean, chair or head of education in schools, colleges of department provided us the name of the individual who was most familiar with developmental activities in that particular institution. We then sent these individuals a four-page questionnaire dealing with faculty development activities. The characteristics of the institutions that responded are summarized in Table 1.

Most of the institutions responding were public (60 percent), accredited (90 percent), operating on a semester basis (86 percent), and non-doctoral granting (72 percent).

Insert Table 1 about here

Findings

Table 2 lists twenty-seven specific developmental activities. The respondents were asked to report the extent to which their institutions engaged in these activities.

Insert Table 2 about here

The responses seem to cluster into three groups. In the first, two-thirds or more of the institutions frequently offer five particular developmental activities. These include (in rank order):

1. Student ratings
2. Travel to conferences
3. Peer review
4. Teaching awards
5. Sabbatical leaves

A substantial minority of institutions (i.e., between 25 and 50 percent) frequently offer 14 developmental activities. Finally, less than 25 percent of the institutions frequently offer only seven activities. These seven "seldom" or "never" activities include the following (in rank order):

21. Help in advising skills
22. Formal assessment of teaching a class
23. Help improving instruction
24. Help constructing tests
25. Help with career goals or personal development

26. Help with course syllabi

27. Help in moving to new and different teaching methods

A second series of questions were included to determine the specific types of faculty development seminars, workshops, and activities that were provided for faculty as part of a faculty development activity. Table 3 provides information on these items.

Insert Table 3 about here

Microcomputer applications and issues related to certification seem to be common topics of faculty workshops. On the other hand, telecommunications, making ethics a part of Education courses, writing, research and grant writing were more likely to be infrequent topics of faculty workshops.

A series of questions were asked to determine the degree to which faculty service in K-12 settings was considered for promotion, appointment to tenure, or merit increases. Table 4 summarizes the responses to this question.

Insert Table 4 about here

Serving K-12 settings seems to be of some importance, or of significant importance, in appointment to tenure (60% of the responding institutions), in promotion (57% of the responding institutions), and in merit (45% of the responding institutions). It is important to note that only 29% of the respondents were in doctoral level institutions.

Finally, a series of questions were asked to determine the extent of institutional support for faculty development activities. These data are presented in Table 5.

Insert Table 5 about here

Table 5 indicates that while 74 percent of the institutions allocate funds for faculty development activities, the model amount of dollars to support such activities is between $1,000 and $5,000 per year. Sixty-three percent of the respondents regard these funds as inadequate. Seventeen percent of respondents report having some form of external support for these activities.

Summary

The faculty development activities engaged in by schools, colleges and departments of education reflect the activities traditionally engaged in by colleges and universities generally. The notion that professional educators might be active in improving their teaching or advisement is not supported by the respondents to this study. Indeed, the activities ranked lowest were those involving changes in teaching methods, testing procedures or course syllabi. Formal assessment of teaching, help in advising skills and receiving counseling regarding career goals or personal development activities were all cited as "infrequent." A wide range of low-cost activities are those reported most frequently.

The picture that begins to emerge is one of minimal effort: most institutional respondents would be able to state that "something" is going on--but not very extensively. Finally, many topics regarded as vital on the rhetoric level (e.g., improving faculty understanding of telecommunications, integrating ethics in courses, improving writing and research skills), are infrequent activities among the respondents to this survey. It will, of course, be helpful to replicate this study with varying populations on a regular basis.

Table 1

Institutional Characteristics of Participating Institutions

Institutional Type	Frequency	Percentage
Public Land Grant	9	26%
Public Non-land Grant	12	34%
Independent Liberal Arts	4	11%
Church-related Liberal Arts	8	23%
Private University	2	5%
Regional Accreditation		
Accredited Regionally	33	94%
No response	2	6%
Calendar System		
Semester		86%
Quarter		14%
Instructional Level		
Baccalaureate Only		29%
Undergraduate + Masters		43%
Doctoral Level		29%

Table 2

Extent of Various Faculty Development Practices Among Responding Institutions

Practices Sponsored During Past Three Years	Frequently	Seldom	Never
	(Percentages)		
Workshops, seminars, or programs to acquaint faculty with goals of the institutions and types of students enrolled.	29	51	20
Faculty who are recognized as outstanding teachers work closely with new or apprentice faculty members.	31	43	23
Faculty with expertise consult with other faculty on teaching or course improvement.	37	49	11
Workshops or programs to help faculty improve their academic advising and counseling skills.	23	57	17
Personal counseling (by existing faculty staff) is provided individual faculty members on career goals and other personal development areas.	9	49	43
Workshops or presentations that explore general issues/trends in teacher education.	46	46	8
Information assessments by colleagues for teaching or course improvement.	26	46	8
System for faculty to assess their own strengths and areas needed improvement.	46	43	9
Specialists to assist individual faculty in instructional or course development by consulting on course objectives and course design.	9	37	54
Specialists to help faculty develop teaching skills such as lecturing or leading discussions, or to encourage use of different teaching/learning strategies such as individualized instruction.	6	46	49

Table 2 (Continued)

Practices Sponsored During Past Three Years	Frequently	Seldom	Never
		(Percentages)	
Specialists to assist faculty in constructing tests or evaluating student performance.	11	31	58
Assistance to faculty in use of instructional technology as a teaching aid (e.g., programmed learning or computer-aided instruction).	31	57	11
Specialist on campus to assist faculty in use of audio visual aids in instruction, including closed-circuit television.	34	46	20
Workshops or presentations that explore various methods or techniques of instruction.	14	49	37
Visiting scholars' programs that bring people to the campus for short or long periods.	31	60	9
Annual awards for excellence in teaching.	71	6	23
Sabbatical leaves with at least half pay.	69	17	14
Summer grants for projects to improve course instruction.	26	60	14
Temporary teaching load reductions to work on a new course, major course revision, or research area.	48	43	9
Use of grants by faculty members for developing new or different approaches to courses or teaching.	34	54	11
Travel grants to refresh or update knowledge in a particular field.	29	49	23
Periodic review of the performance of faculty members whether tenured or not.	74	20	3
Travel funds available to attend professional conferences.	77	23	--

Table 2 (Continued)

Practices Sponsored During Past Three Years	Frequently	Seldom	Never
		(Percentages)	
Systematic ratings of instruction by students used to help faculty improve.	91	3	6
Formal assessments by colleagues for teaching or course improvements (i.e., visitations or use of assessment forms).	20	49	31
A policy of unpaid leaves that cover educational or development purposes.	31	49	17
Systematic teaching or course evaluations by an administrator for improvement purposes.	26	40	31

Table 3

Frequency of Specific Activities Provided

During 1985-1986 Fiscal Year

Activity	Yes	No	No Response
Microcomputer Applications	54	29	17
Telecommunications for Education	14	69	17
Writing and Publishing Skills	29	54	17
Improving Research Skills	31	51	17
Improving Grant Writing Skills	31	51	17
Current Teacher Certification Issues	57	26	17
Integrating Ethics Skills into Education Courses	14	66	20
Incorporating Research Knowledge into Teacher Education Courses	34	49	17

Table 4

Importance of Faculty Service in K-12 Settings in Faculty Evaluations

To what extent does your institution consider FACULTY SERVICE in K-12 settings when evaluating your faculty for promotion in rank?	
It is a significant consideration.	14%
It is of some importance.	43%
It is noted but not critical.	34%
Not considered.	9%
To what extent does your institution consider FACULTY SERVICE in K-12 settings when evaluating your faculty for appointment to tenure?	
It is a significant consideration.	23%
It is of some importance.	37%
It is noted but not critical.	34%
Not considered.	3%
To what extent does your institution consider FACULTY SERVICE in K-12 settings when evaluating your faculty for merit?	
It is a significant consideration.	11%
It is of some importance.	34%
It is noted but not critical.	26%
Not considered.	23%

Table 5

Institutional Support for Faculty Development Activities

Does your institution currently allocate any funds (apart from sabbaticals) to faculty development in your SCD/E?	
Yes	74%
No	23%
N.R.	3%
If YES, is the amount:	
Less than $1,000 per year?	11%
$1,000 to $5,000 per year?	45%
$6,000 to $10,000 per year?	9%
More than $10,000 per year?	9%
N.R.	26%
Do you consider the amount allocated:	
Inadequate?	63%
Adequate?	23%
More than adequate?	--
N.R.	3%
Does your SCD/E currently receive any external grants or contracts specifically designated for faculty development?	
Yes	17%
No	83%
If YES, is the amount:	
Less than $1,000 per year?	3%
$1,000 to $5,000 per year?	11%
$6,000 to $10,000 per year?	3%
More than $10,000 per year?	0%
N.R.	83%
Do you consider the amount allocated:	
Inadequate?	26%
Adequate?	9%
More than adequate?	--
N.R.	65%
Has your SCD/E offered any faculty inservice activities within the 1985-1986 fiscal year which you regard as particularly successful?	
Yes	31%
No	69%